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T H R E E  
QUESTIONS resolved.

V I Z.

*What is Religion?*

*What is the Christian Religion?*

*What is the Christian Catholic Church?*

W H E R E I N

P O P E R Y

I S

Proved to have no Claim, either as a Religion, as the Christian Religion, or as the Christian Catholic-Church.

I N

Three LETTERS to ----- Esq.

W I T H

A POSTSCRIPT on Mr. *Hume's* Natural History of Religion.

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*Men instead of squaring their governments by the Rule of Christianity, have shaped Christianity by the measures of their Government, have reduced that strait line by the crooked; and bungling divine and human things together, have been always hacking and hewing one another, to frame an irregular figure of political incongruity.*

An Account of the growth of Popery and arbitrary Power in England, by *A. Marvel, Esq.*

---

L O N D O N :

Printed for A. HENDERSON, under the Royal Exchange, 1757.

[Price one Shilling.]

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L E T T E R the First, <sup>BX</sup> 1767

O N

T41

## R E L I G I O N.

S I R,

**S**INCE man is made for religion, or since religion is the principal excellence and perfection of man; it must be a matter of vast consequence to affix the idea of religion, with such justness and precision as avoids error and excess. This being done, the nature of the christian religion may be more easily known and ascertained, in its distinguishing principles, laws, rules and institutions. And because the word, *church*, has had an hallowed sound in the mouths of many; this also may be soon determined, in its religious sense, or in its properly *catholic* signification.

I shou'd define religion, to be, “ that first obligation on the human powers of understanding and choice, which binds their ob-

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fervance

servance of truth, both in sentiment and action." in other words, truth is the great object of religion, as it is concerned with the temper, aim, and behaviour of man.

But as *good* is the inseparable mark, or characteristic impression of truth ; that is to say, real, durable, eternal good ; there must be an archetype, an existence, in which truth and goodness are unalienable attributes, essential, immutable and eternal. which being, we call God.

The authoritative object of religion, can then be no other than God ; because in his perfections we contemplate all that can excite reverence, trust, hope, and joy in us, as intelligent, rational and conscious creatures, absolutely dependent on the infinitely supreme. which must be the case, because *truth*, or an obvious difference in temper and action, occasioned by its lead, has no operative fixed signification that can influence and oblige ; except in the resource of an authority, that implies power, wisdom and goodness, active and distinguishing, in all its sovereignty and dominion. for unless there be an intelligence at the head of nature and existence, truth and falsehood, good and evil, wou'd be vague, indeterminate ideas ; or wou'd change their appearance,

ance, by vertue of merely contingent condition and circumstance. This will be confessed by all, who own, that goodness is the unalienable impression, or effect of truth. or, that every intelligent creature, who has a concern with truth, has a concern with it as necessary or essential to his own happiness. I know of none, who are masters of reasoning, but acknowledge it is a first principle of nature, “ to consult its own constitution, with the benefits and advantages of life and being.” Now, cou’d this end be attainable, by any other measures than those prescribed by truth, it wou’d follow, that truth and falsehood are unmeaning terms ; or the ideas belonging to them changeable. But if good or happiness is not attainable, unless in the direction of truth, there will be an obligation to consult and follow truth, of no less weight and moment than the motive of life, ease, peace and happiness.

What the directions of truth, or the will of God, are, may now be very easily discovered. and they are what inform or instruct, in the several relations of being. *for example*, such as in that of creatures to the creator ; whose care and bounty preserves, provides for, and refreshes under the perils, wants, infirmities, frailties or weaknesses of nature.

nature. which gives a plan of the reverence, gratitude, love, and humility that make up the homage due to the creator.

In the contemplation of his attributes of wisdom, and power, made illustrious by his providence, in the demonstrations of impartial universal goodness, immutable truth and faithfulness, we perceive obligations to resemblance in spirit and behaviour towards our fellow creatures; even as the corresponding disposition in us, to promote and produce order, peace and pleasure, is the very union and harmony of the human mind with its God. assured we are, that this obligation results from the law of relation ; since we are all of the same nature, have similar faculties, powers, and perceptions, sensations and inclinations. that is to say, we are all equally capable of receiving pain or pleasure, either as the truth of action appears to be expressed towards us, or as there is a violation of truth in men's treatment of us. And because we are capable of the same sort of impressions from that attribute of truth, which we call goodness ; the regard to our own felicity obliges to a religious observance of truth, in all our social intercourses, which shall discover benevolence.

But because these branches of religion will have all their vigour, energy and consistency, from the care taken to keep up a good decorum in our own breasts, or from a constant rule maintained over our own appetites, affections, and passions, [which would be irregular and excessive, if not under a constant circumspection,] there will hence appear another branch of moral obligation, which we denominate, *self-government*. and is what implies, inspection, correction, discipline and suppression of various unreasonable desires and aversions. neither do we neglect that fertile faculty the imagination, which wou'd otherwise be extravagant in its colouring and painting of images, as well as unnatural in the configurations of them.

The conclusiveness of the reason or evidence, will, by this time, approve itself to our most critical view, in the enquiry we are making after religion. for, you know, *Sir*, we naturally and reasonably admire what is excellent; we supremely admire what has superlative perfection. this supreme admiration, is only a different form of expression for, *adoration*. if therefore we do justly conceive of absolute and invariable perfection in God, the wisest, greatest and best of all possible beings, our admiration will be that of unwearied

unwearied fervent homage, the majesty of whose goodness we must for ever reverence. In like manner, because we are naturally disposed to confide in the most experienced and unfailing sources of supply and succour, and to rely on those friendships long known to be sincere and effectual ; the certainty of HIS, whose presence and spirit has hitherto sustained us in life, and supplied us with all the abilities of being and enjoyment, is an almighty, eternal source, that infinitely deserves our first hope and supreme confidence.

The reason and ground of the social obligations will be equally obvious, from the rule of right and fit being universally acknowledged, by the claims and expectations which all mankind have upon, and from one another. for however an human mind may be viciated by lust, and averse to doing equally and right to a fellow creature, that very depraved spirit will complain loudly of such injury, when done to itself. and we know, that all virtuous minds are agreed in the first principles of equity, truth and right. These then are widely spreading testimonies ; and every man must own, if able to think, that the inward conscious principle ever finds, what we call truth and right, to sit easy, and what we call falsehood and wrong, to sit uneasy, on the reflection.



reflexion: or, this is the voice of reason, nature and the God of nature, *that we do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.* It is the goon which God has universally shewn to man. and has the preference everlastingly to ritual, and the parade of external devotion.

Religion, is what gives man his whole moral complexion. it shews itself in his veneration of truth, righteousness and goodness, in all his devotional, and in all his social intercourse. A veneration of truth, which secures his modesty and humility, is a qualification needful to regular and virtuous deportment in all the offices and services of humanity: which can never dispense with sincerity, uprightness, and benevolence in any professions thereof; but contemplates all beings around us, as claiming and deserving from us the usage and treatment of rational, moral, and accountable agents.

You will hence, own with me, *Sir*, that popery cannot be a religion; because popery can dispense with sincerity and truth, however solemnly professed; and can sanctify such violations too, with the plea of doing service to religion.—Yet papists have the effrontery to deny, that there is any such avowed principle in popery, as that of *no faith to be kept with heretics.*—Tho' we are

able to prove the charge upon them, from a general decree of one of their famous councils, from a particular decree also of the same council, and from the authority of one of their popes. Allow me to place before you these authorities in the following references. for “ the general decree of the council of *Con-*  
“ *stance*, respecting safe-conduct granted by  
“ secular princes to those suspected of heresy

See, *l'Enfant's* Hist. coun. of *Constance*  
edit. 1. p. 47.

“ The particular decree of the council of  
“ *Constance*, respecting the safe conduct  
“ given by the emperor to *John Hufs*.

See *ibid.* p. 48.

“ And *pope Clement* the eleventh's letter to  
“ the emperor *Charles the sixth*, respecting  
“ the treaty of *Altranstadt*—entitled, *Cle-*  
“ *mentis undecimi Pont. Max. epistolae et bre-*  
“ *via selectiora. Roma ex typographia reve-*  
“ *rendae Camerae Apostolicae. superiorum per-*  
“ *missu et privilegio.*”

If the authority of pope and council be then of any weight, popery can dispense with truth and sincerity, even when most solemnly promised and professed. and if the constant practice of that superstition can confirm the hellish principle, popery is no religion.



gion. for all whom the priests seduce and debauch, are soon reconciled to this diabolical principle.

Take we another view ; and we shall every where find, that an abusive idea of religion, has been greatly owing to a fanciful drapery, in which men have dressed the expressions of their homage. We may account for this, since the world no sooner corrupted the doctrine and idea of the UNITY, but they invented deities of various class, rank and dignity ; to whom they assigned their respective departments, offices and honours : the unavoidable consequence of such idolatry, would be, to introduce rites, ceremonies and systems of ritual and service. When this had darkened the whole world, its almighty, tender, and compassionate parent, shewed his wisdom and prudence in that appointed system of ritual, which made up the civil and political homage of Israel. these carnal ordinances and the worldly sanctuary, were suited to counterbalance the idolatrous and numerous ritual of the nations.

But neither in this, did religion consist. I mean, the religion of nature, reason, and everlasting, immutable truth and goodness : this religion could not adopt the hebrew ritual, as any part of it. and therefore it was,

that their prophets do continually teach, as well as their law-giver had done, that they should carefully distinguish between the political ritual, and the moral constitution. They should do this, forasmuch as a man might be extremely exact in his observance of the ritual, and yet be deplorably wanting in moral righteousness and goodness. virtuous dispositions, which only could avail him of the favour of his sovereign. This is so plain an observation, that an honest reader cannot easily mistake, in consulting the old testament writings. and the gospel history has shewn it to a demonstration. *viz.* that the ceremonial system could only be temporal in its nature and tendencies, as it was local in the observance and obligation. Such ground is there of that comparative contempt, in these declarations, *the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. I dwell with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, and to that man will I look, who is of a poor and contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word.—But he who kills an ox, is as if he slew a man; he who sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off the head of a dog: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swines blood; because he has chosen his own ways, and his soul de-*  
*lighteth*

*lighteth in abominations* (a). Arguments which conclude, that sacrifices and oblations, even under judaism, had no value ; except what was given them by the virtuous and moral dispositions of the offerer. nor could they have any acceptance with the Deity, but as the expressions of sincere piety, and of true devotion. which could not, at all, be in the victim, or in the oblation, in the meat or the drink offering; but would wholly derive its worthiness from the sentiment, the aim and spirit of the owner of such victim or offering. It would have been extremely stupid to have imagined, that these provisions for the altar could deserve the friendship of heaven, *when HIS are the cattle of a thousand hills! and from him is all the fruit of the trees, and the productions of the field. yea, the world is his, and the fulness thereof!* how ridiculous to suppose, he would eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ! These symbols of penitence, or of thanksgiving, borrowed all their propriety from the temper of the human breast, that made the offering.

The author of *the divine legation of Moses, &c.* would, perhaps, have better understood his subject, had he considered the hebrew ritual  
and

and hierarchy, as exhibiting to mankind the utmost compass of a civil political-establishment; which can, in its own nature, have no higher motives than what are temporal and local. Promises of a future happiness, would, impertinently have been made to the sacrifices, ablutions, and oblations of that republic: tho' appointed to secure them the possession of Canaan, their protection and prosperity in that country, and their remaining a distinguished people from the idolatrous nations. The very dress of the priests, and all their allotments, their ornamental robes of office, were intended to command respect and reverence; and they had distinct orders of the priesthood, and one arch-priest among them who had the pre-eminence. This constitution, was suited to the country, condition, political constitution of this people, and answered many wise, temporal ends and purposes: but could not in its own nature and tendency, be considered, as the religion of that people; because, both the service itself and the end of the observance were bodily and temporal. So the oblations of first fruits, annexed the blessings of fruitfulness to their trees, to their vineyards and their lands; and their sacrifices secured to them the health, increase, and prosperity of their cattle; their ablutions or washings

washings contributed naturally to their own cleanliness and health. national festivals, had the promise of national protections. All these compliances might be made, where the love of God, of righteousness, truth, and goodness were not found. *Religion*, which is concerned with truth and eternal life, the principles and motives that are spiritual and heavenly, remains quite a distinct system.

The hebrew ritual and hierarchy, yet serves to shew to the world, that no establishment of religion, is either practicable or possible. There may be systems of ceremony, opinion, and ritual, recommended by civil temporal motive ; but the religion of man, will bear no such appointments, nor admit of any kind of human terror or allurements.

We might thus proceed in our conceptions of religion, and affirm, that such is its divine nature, that no expressions of devotion, however warm and animated, will determine either its purity or its reality. Mystics and wild enthusiasts, we know, are fed and nourished upon an extravagant and mad devotion. sounds and ceremonies give a passionate entertainment to thousands, who place all their confidence in the homage. and conclude, because they were vehemently affected themselves, that their deities have been altogether

altogether as much agitated and influenced : tho', all the while, they have forgotten, that these fervours of the mind and meltings of the spirit, can have no religion in them farther than they mend the heart, moralize the sentiment, and regulate the life. Prayer, praise, and penance have no good meaning, without integrity and honesty ; or without an uniform unreserved obedience to the moral system of truth and goodness. and the more animated the devotion, separated from the moral influence, the more delusive and deadly the infatuation. The *christian constitution* can have no one feature taken from the hebrew hierarchy, or from any of the invented-systems of faith or worship, found among the professors of christianity. The dream is unnatural, of any civil establishment of religion. quite so of the christian religion ! since the sentiment, the taste, the capacity of each individual christian, has an equal claim to all the privileges and emoluments of the gospel. and there can be neither *law-giver*, nor *judge* found, among all the disciples of Jesus.

These observations would have been of unspeakable service to mankind, had they but preserved the distinction here made between the ritual and the moral, under the hebrew constitution. But in the perversion



verseness of mankind, they, on the contrary, have foolishly and absurdly fancied, that because this ritual claimed a divine institution, therefore a ceremonious ritual must be essential to religion. and moreover, that the more pompous and striking the ritual, the more sacred, venerable, and effectual to the ends of devotion. — May we not say, what a wise teacher said in another case, *from the begining it was not so*.—and that 'whatever belongs to religion, is simple, moral, invariable and eternal.

How indeed should it be otherwise, when its seat is no where else but in the mind of man? and owes all its existence there, to industrious application, and to a virtuous use of all the powers and faculties, under the means of culture and improvement. Religion is owing to those labours of attention and examination of evidence, which constitute sentiment, taste and character. Hence it is, that no man will be ever qualified to prescribe and give law to the conception and disposition of another, in point of evidence, and to its method of gaining his assent; or can shew him, which way his reverence, trust, hope, and joy in God can be best excited and exercised, by a form of worship. Every man will make a judgment for himself. Truly it is unac-

countable that men should be so presumptuous, in matters of religious faith and worship, when we never knew, or read of any man, who pretended an ability of forming and modelling the moral temper and taste of another, at his own pleasure. where and when did he live, who would undertake to make that man honest, who had a pilfering spirit, and delighted in cheating and over-reaching? or that man sincere and faithful, who was practised in all the arts of dissimulation and hypocrisy? or to make him compassionate and sympathizing, who is utterly insensible and unfeeling? to give moral character or disposition, is more than the Deity himself proposeth to do to any one intelligent creature, whom he leaves free, that he may become religious or moral. Liberty, freedom, that which is innate and connatural to the faculties and powers of the human soul, in the exercises of thought, reflection and choice, is indispenfibly requisite to whatever can be justly denominated, or deemed *religious*. No kind of human authority can therefore be admitted into the sacred province of religion. The attempt is as vain as insolent; and can do no more than shew the folly and pride of the rude pretender. And yet, such has been the deplorable ignorance and barbarity of the world, that, in  
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all ages and countries, men have more or less connived and countenanced, nay, rever'd and obeyed the insinuating, imperious priest ; and thereby have preserved and cherished the wide imposture.

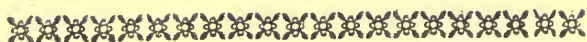
Such are my sentiments on religion ; they are given you, *Sir*, without any reserve or restraint, as I could best form a judgment on the divine theme. In my next, as I promised, you may expect as much freedom on the christian religion.

Believe me, *Sir*, to be,

with great veneration,

Yours ———





L E T T E R    the    Second,

O N    T H E

C H R I S T I A N    R E L I G I O N.

S I R,

**T**O some thoughts sent you on religion, I proceed to offer others on the *christian religion*; which I shall consider as distinguished from all other systems of faith and worship.

And here, from the divine oracle, a fine subject opens, well deserving of our admiration, because of its real excellence and glory. A first discovery, which you will make whilst surveying this system, is, the religion of nature, reason, and social obligation preserved and presented in all its divine simplicity, plainness and purity. Not a single branch maimed, injured, or mutilated: but the whole moral recovered from under all the obscurity, that ignorance, pride, prejudice, vice and idolatry had spread over its fair, divine complexion. the pristine energy and vigor

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gor restored in all the precept ; and the varied doctrinal views of the nature and influences of truth are so given, as are best suited to dissipate and dispel the gloomy and dark cloud of ignorance, to weaken the resistance of prejudice and lust, and to convince mankind, of the most friendly aspect which truth has on the world.

Every of the operations of truth are thus remedial and restorative ; for they exhibit the love and goodness, the propitious benignity of God to the depraved and lapsed ; and so, do powerfully excite the relentings and penitence of the wanderer. All this while, the great teacher professeth, he came not to relax a single precept of morality, nor to connive at any one of the silly and wicked inventions of mankind, which debauch the sentiment and debase the nature of man.

What then, and wherein may we conceive of any thing which distinguishes the christian religion ? can any thing be found in the christian religion of more importance, than we have already discovered in our view of religion ?

I should verily be of opinion, there can be nothing more important ; and yet, that the christian religion does afford us distinguishing advantages. Is not this one distinct  
and

and peculiar excellence, in the christian system, *viz.* its excluding all fanciful ritual and ceremony, as well as those political institutions which were made under Judaism? When the spread of superstition had become universal, the whole term or condition of man's acceptance, is now shewn to be moral; and not the least place given to figure, symbol, type, or imagery. so that *repentance and remission*, becomes the peculiar glory of the gospel system. And because mankind have been loading themselves with difficulties and perplexities about a future-state, this institution has shewn, that life and immortality do, and shall arise out of the principles of truth, righteousness and goodness. that the soul's immortality is not a natural, but an acquired principle. that the real christian shall not come into judgment; but is already passed from death unto life; that the law of the spirit of life does actually make men free from the law of sin and death. thus certainly is it *eternal life*, to receive the gospel-evidence, and conform to the design of this institution.

The delivery of such a doctrine as this, would naturally require some suitable attestations to his divine character and mission, who was the revealer. and accordingly, there was such a train of evidence, as compleat-  
ed

ed the testimony ; to the end that mankind might not remain doubtful or unsatisfied in the doctrine. and hereupon the person who receives the testimony concerning Jesus, does, virtually, *set to his seal, that God is true*. And verily, had not Jesus made known the divine plan of peace and good will to men, no such apparatus of testimony would ever have been given ; nor could he, with that confidence we find him doing it, always appeal to the testimony, as proving, his doctrine had all its authority from the father. allowing himself to be an *impostor*, if the nature of the evidence be not such, as will determine him the son, or well beloved of God. once he declares, that what he had taught men about eternal life, was the very same thing, as if the father himself had said it ; for says he,—*I and my father are one*.

No controversy could remain about the divinity of the gospel system, would but mankind honestly confess, that it allows of no sort, no degree of pre-eminence or authority, in, or among any of its professors ; and does absolutely exclude an *HIERARCHY*. it does this, with great perspicuity and distinctness, as well as solemnity ; tho' the pompous, worldly thing had been appointed under the hebrew political establishment.

Great

Great part of St. *Paul's* epistles is employed in shewing the abhorrence which christianity has to such appointments. and the divine Jesus has expressly declared, that no man can become a disciple of his, unless he be free from pride, lust of power, and avarice, and as much estranged to ambition, as the infant, in all its innocence. *except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* and they, whom he pronounceth to be in the first class of the blessed, are, *the poor in spirit.* This is so clear a doctrine and principle of christianity, that he declares, a camel might as easily go thro' the eye of a needle, as a man approve himself a disciple of his, who retains a lust of power and riches. for which reason he has forbidden all his followers, *calling any man master or rabbi ; or their being called so of others.* And if any of them thirst after pre-eminence, he shall be the servant of all ; or accursed, as was Cainaan.

So far was the Gospel institution from admitting of worldly motive, that the *twelve* and the *seventy*, when endowed with healing powers, which were to afford relief to the wretched and distempered, throughout Judea, are to have no compensations, fees, or rewards from the benefitted people, more than their food

food and lodging. And notwithstanding the apostles did long retain a notion of the Messiah's kingdom being temporal, yet all their writings do abundantly shew, there is nothing like an hierarchy in the gospel constitution. The scheme of power and authority in faith and worship, is quite paganish, in the opinion of our Lord; *ye know, saith he, that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them, but it shall not be so among you.*

No matter then how early it was, that men, called christians, began to devise a political system, and to establish a jurisdiction over faith and conscience; no matter how specious the arguments, drawn from temporal convenience, detached from prescription, customs, or inveterate prejudice, the hierarchy is a manifest departure from christianity; it has no support on the original, plain gospel institution; and is as diametrically opposite to the heavenly religion of Jesus, as any two things can possibly be. to which corruption of christianity, must be ascribed all the disgrace and discredit, all its want of spread and efficacy, and all the evils and confusions which have been fathered upon it, in all ages.



How easy is it now, to account for the rise or origin of popery? lust of power, ambition, avarice, and sensuality gave conception and birth to popery. vice fastning on the minds of the clergy, was fatally cherished by the superstition of CONSTANTINE, the first christian emperor: the civil honours which he heaped upon them, begun the union between the church and state; and became a precedent of the most unnatural alliance.—Yet, popery would arrogate to itself the religion of Jesus, when it bears no more resemblance than there is between the wolf and the lamb; or between the serpent and the dove. It would be as unnecessary to offer any laboured argument to prove, that popery and the christian religion, are not one and the same thing; as it would be to prove, that white is not black; or that the moon is not a cheshire cheese. A man acquainted with his New Testament, and that knows any thing of popery, would as soon expect to find in that revelation, a system of magic, sorcery, or diabolism; or of the most gross idolatry, as a system of popery. a superstition that contains the very extremes of absurdity, idolatry, ignorance and cruelty. No man can embrace popery, but by renouncing his senses, sacrificing his reason, reproaching



proaching all his intellectual powers, and protesting against the plainness and sufficiency of the gospel, as a rule of faith and worship. for the papist resigns himself implicitly to the guidance of an order of men, called, *priests* ; and depends on a ritual of devotion, utterly averse unto, and wholly unknown in the New Testament. a system of liturgy, one would think, calculated rather to ridicule and burlesque, than assist or encourage devotion.—would you conceive an idea of the archetype of popery ? you have it in pagan idolatry, and in the pharisaical abuse of the hebrew ritual and hierarchy. the depravity of the Jewish teachers, the vices of pharisaism, condemned in the *law's* denounced by the divine Jesus, give a lively image of the spirit and genius of popery : which has reversed the gospel system in all its tenets, doctrines, customs, principles and practices.

How came it then, that popery could ever gain any footing, or spread in a protestant country ?

Strange it should ; yet many reasons may be assigned. I will lay them before you, with all the perspicuity I am able. You know, *Sir*, vice prevails. immorality has fatally spread among us. men grow vain and

wanton, and a dissipation of thought, is too general or common. that will be most acceptable, which does most excuse the labour of examination and enquiry. This hellish superstition soothes the guilty spirit, gratifies the lust ; grants indulgences, provides the sponge for sins, by absolution.

Popery puts on the air of charity in a protestant country, and abounds in alms givings and tenderesses to the poor and miserable. artfully insinuating into the vulgar by this stratagem.

Popery pleads a great resemblance in her faith and worship to the systems, symbols, and liturgy, adopted by some protestants. in which similitude she has plaid off her arguments with the greatest plausibility, and most horrid success ! and it is to be lamented, that protestants who avow the sole authority of the gospel, as a rule of faith and worship, should retain rites, ceremonies, customs, confessions and liturgies, so analagous to popery. surely great advantage is thus given to that superstition ; for few will distinguish between the *argumentum ad hominem*, and the truth and reason of things. Moreover, what has contributed much to the spread of this superstition among protestants, has been, the great veneration of popery, professed by churchmen,

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as *the mother of them all!* ever attended with a contemptuous, disdainful eye cast on the protestant, that dares to remove to a yet greater distance than themselves from that superstition, and from churchism. this is an open encouragement given to the vulgar, to think favourably of popery, as the true religion of christians.

Great writers have shewn the danger there is, in giving such connivance to a superstition, that would subvert all equal government, and is an open professed enemy to the liberties of mankind, civil and religious: which assumes an authority of deposing princes, and dissolving the most solemn oaths and pledges of fealty and allegiance. many have wondered, that no remonstrances among us could have any effect: but they did not know, that there has long subsisted a coalition between popery and the prime m——r? what, if the principal papists have given their influence and interest at the elections, in consideration of such connivances?—However this, an instance among many, I could mention, of the daring measures of papists in perverting protestants, and debauching, with their pestilent superstition. for not content with corrupting vast numbers of the more ignorant and poor, they have  
even

even laid hold on students, young gentlemen of family and fortune. “ one, the only son of Mr. \*\*\*\*\*, late member of parliament for a burrough in the west, who was sent to our principal university ; a youth of family and fortune, they did actually pervert.”—In such open defiance of our laws, has popery been long making great progress. and whether the threatening consequences are not formidable, may well deserve the consideration of such, who are able to discern the inestimable value of our civil and religious liberties, laws, and constitution. But whether we have sufficient numbers of these, left among us to save a sinking country, God only knows.—It would be far from us, after all, to desire any pains or penalties should be inflicted on men, because they have an extravagant ritual, and are fond of worshipping a troop of deities or demons : or for saying prayers by tale or number, either to real or imaginary saints : for venerating a wafer or crucifix. since he who can feast his soul, either on gold, silver, or precious stones, or who can best relish wood, hay, or stubble ; should only have our pity, and we ought to wish him a less depraved appetite. but so long as the papist holds opinions subversive of morality, destructive of society, dangerous to the civil and religious rights of

man-

mankind. *i. e.* so long as the hand of popery is against every man; so long every man's hand should be against popery. The voice of nature, of self-preservation is loud in the breast of every protestant against this superstition.

This, *Sir*, is not the language of prejudice, or of hypothesis. see the opinion of an apostle, *the kingdom of God, the christian religion, consists not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace, and joy.* Protestants ought therefore to banish from them, every thing that has a similar complexion to popery, all claims of power and pre-eminence; every thing that looks like a ritual of human invention. and till this is done, there will be but little difference between their system, and that of popery. for a political-church, with civil dignities, offices, powers and distinctions, has a worldly complexion; and will be of the nature of that very superstition, which is expressly disowned and condemned in the doctrine of our Lord.

In the above investigation of the theme, I presume to have fully proved, that the christian religion forbids all officious ceremony and pompous ritual; and gives no licence to the devices of human imagination; that it disowns all distinctions of pre-eminence and power: and assures us, that God  
will

will put down all rule, all authority and power. and that this Jesus, the christians one Lord, shall reign till the father has put under his feet all these things. Never till then, will Jesus be able to exhibit his religion in all its purity, spotless lustre, and glory.

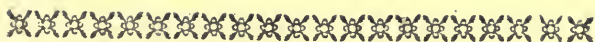
If these epistles are not disagreeable, you may expect a third upon the christian-catholic-church. in a season of such general corruption, as the present, possibly, it may prove a theme, which will afford some useful interesting reflexion.

I cannot *Sir*,

but subscribe myself

Yours —————





L E T T E R the Third,

O N T H E

*Christian-Catholic-Church.*

S I R,

**A**S the plainness and simplicity of religion, are deducible from the universality of its obligation ; and as the christian religion is distinguishable from all others, by its purity and spirituality, we might be led reasonably to expect, that the *christian-catholic-church* would consist of a spotless, chaste body of undefiled professors. And so, in truth it will be found to be, when we come to form a judgment of it in its native, uncorrupt, and genuine character. It will be such, notwithstanding the vulgar idea, the current conception of church, and of the catholic church has been, in most ages, extremely confused, vague and indeterminate.

As far as each and every adopted system had departed from the original canon, they have mistaken the christian religion ; and in the place

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of it, they have put, church, and the catholic-church. All bigots, of protestant name, who would pretend a derivation of spiritual powers, and of sacred indelible character, whether they will own it or no, borrow from that forcerefs, the romish or the papal distinction. Some of them, would have the term, *church*, to deserve the most significative and emphatical meaning, when applied to their little communities; merely because they have bye-laws and rules of admiffion, without which, none may be permitted to partake of their mysteries. And most certainly, *churchism*, implies always in it, some sort of spiritual power, authority and domination. for, even where there are no civil aids, no fecular honours and privileges conferred, there will be fome imposing fpirit, that dares to prefcribe and give law to confcience. And all *church-men* whatfoever, are for interpreting holy fcriptures for others. they will make their own fenfe the ftandard. and do charge with damnable herefy and blafphemy, the different opinion! fo that they ever expect men fhall think with them, if they will have any fellowfhip or communion. this is *churchism*, among all denominations.

The word, *church*, has nothing in its original meaning that is facred. St. *Luke* ufeth  
the



the word, *ecclesia*, for the Ephesian mob †. And it stood to express any concourse of people. In the religious use of the word, by the pens of the New Testament writers, it meaneth, “ a number of christians met together, in any place, for the purposes of christian worship.” It matters not, whether in a private house, or in a more spacious place of concourse. And when the word, *church*, is designed to comprehend, all christians, it then may properly have affixed to it, the idea of *catholic-church*. the word catholic being a compound of *κατα* and *ολος*. And is once used in the New Testament. *viz.* in *Acts* iv. 18. where the Apostles are *vehemently* prohibited speaking in the name of Jesus. it may then signify, a *total*, or a *whole*.—Ask now a papist what he meaneth by the church, and by the catholic church?—He will more ordinarily convey an idea he has of the whole hierarchy, from the secular and regular priesthood of the lowest class, up to Popes, Cardinals and Councils. But the more emphatical idea he has of the term, *catholic*, is, of all them who are devoted to that superstition.

Church, in the mouth of a protestant, who is glorying in a civil establishment, has certain civil advantages belonging to it; immu-

† *Act* xix, 32.

nities and emoluments which distinguish it from all others around him. And here, the better to enter into the spirit of *churchism*, it will be proper to examine, how the prejudice becomes so very prevalent or powerful? if I am not egregiously mistaken, much emphasis is laid on the vertue of *consecrations*. The efficacy of which is of such importance, as to give the appellation, *church*, to an edifice that has once had the honour of such priestly operations. a degree of real holiness is thereby communicated, such as is supposed sufficient to render the prayers and praises offered in it the more acceptable. In this article of churchism, St. *Stephen* seems unhappily to have been an arch-heretic ; for in his apology, he ridicules, or satyrizeth all such notion of holiness of place. *Solomon*, sais he, *built him an house, howbeit the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands, for heaven is his throne, and earth his footstool : what house will ye build for me, saith the Lord, and what is the place of my rest ? hath not mine hand made all these things ? q. d.* to what manner of purpose has been the priestly consecration of place, or of edifice ?

I could wish this branch of churchism had staid with papal Rome, and never migrated or spread any farther. but you know,  
*Sir,*

*Sir*, there are others, who will have the *church* to be of *Tyrian* order, in its structure and fabrication. the model is taken from Solomon's porch, built by Hiram ; which had two pillars of exquisite workmanship, curiously embellished and richly adorned. the one called *Jachin*. *i. e.* establishment: the other *Boaz*, *i. e.* power or strength. 1 *Kings* vii. 21. Who think you, *Sir*, could refuse a consecration to such a fine building?--and who can find in his heart, to give up an institution of such great antiquity? indeed, in the consecration of churches, the office is taken from the hebrew system, because unluckily there were no materials to be found in the christian canon.

Another ground and source of churchism, is, the consecration of *time*. days of distinct holiness, communicated by the birth of some saint, or by the death of some martyr. besides weeks of penance, and others of illumination. less offence at these consecrations is not found in St. Paul, than that we before found in Stephen. *We observe days and months, times and years, I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.*—A superstition this, which took its rise among pagans, who had their *lucky* and their *unlucky* days. And the first converts from heathenism

ism to christianity, were much addicted to these observances. a superstition strangely continued and rooted among christians. and yet, not so very astonishing neither, when it is considered how many indulge to all the idleness of credulity; and that the most absurd and ridiculous things, have always had very warm advocates among churchmen, however famous they may have been for learning and devotion.

I mentioned times of fasting. In these seasons, such as *Lent* and the stationary-weekly fasts, the distinction is chiefly made, by the mortifying exchange of *fish* for *flesh*! a church-difference is put between one sort of food and another: in direct contradiction to the teaching of Jesus, who says. *they are without understanding*, who place any moral uncleanness in meats; for, *whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the viscera, and is thrown off by the bodily secretions.*--*whereas the things which defile a man, are what proceed out of the mouth, and have their origin in the heart* (a). And St. Paul mentions the church-injunctions of *abstaining from meats, as a doctrine of demons*; as well as that of *forbidding to marry* (b). The institution of the gospel condemns these distinctions; and the church-

(a) *Matth.* xv. 16--20.(b) *1 Tim.* iv. 3.

church-fastings, are, in themselves ridiculously absurd, as well as impiously anti-christian. Their antiquity will no more stamp a sanctity upon them, than it does on falsehood in the devil, in that *he was a liar from the beginning*.

Consecration of *persons*, conveyance thereby of indelible character, from the frenetic dream of deriving authoritative powers from the apostles, is the very bulwark of churchism. This consecration of persons, supposes in it, an ability communicated, by episcopal ordination, of giving efficacy to the word of God, and to the institutions of christianity, besides the power of absolving the confessing criminal. *Dodwell* affirms, that the whole efficacy depends on the priest. these are the things he affirms, *viz.* “ that the reception of  
 “ the elements is no otherwise necessary to  
 “ the remission of sins, than as it obliges us  
 “ to depend on the consent of the priests,  
 “ who alone can oblige God to ratify in heaven what is transacted by them on earth (a).”  
 “ All indifferent judges must prefer the power of obliging God to open and shut heaven’s  
 “ gates, before a thousand kingdoms (b).”  
 And *Hicks* says, “ let the bishop be honoured  
 “ among you as God (c).” And such is the  
 surprising

(a) See his premonition to his epistolary discourse, p. 66.

(b) See his Paraenesis, p. 222.

(c) Two treatises, p. 201.

surprising degree of priestly authority, in the affair of absolution, “ that heaven itself is  
 “ said, to wait the sentence from the priests  
 “ mouth, and God himself follows the judgment  
 “ ment of his servant the priest (a).”—It is not easy to imagine any thing more extravagant than churchism is, in the article of consecration of persons; as appears from this short specimen. And this superstition has gone so deeply into the imaginations of some, that they have concluded the very *liturgies* devised by priests, to be no other than the dictature of the Holy Ghost. I could refer you to the opinion of one divine, who writing on the liturgy of the church of England, says, “ not a tittle of it but what was by the  
 “ dictate of the Holy Ghost, and I should  
 “ think myself accursed if I were not able to  
 “ maintain it. Blame not my holy zeal if I  
 “ do vindicate that *saving* book against the  
 “ schismatics greatest exceptions,—certainly  
 “ ly therefore blessed are they which die in  
 “ maintaining the service book, which can,  
 “ without contradiction, father the very ceremonies  
 “ of it upon the Holy Ghost (b).” This is the pillar of churchism. but tho’ the image might be taken from the porch of Solomon

(a) Sparrow’s sermon of absolution, p. 15.

(b) Dr. Swadling’s sermon, &c. p. 149.

Solomon, it has no shadow of an exemplar in the gospel system. The keys given to *Peter*, have no other meaning, than that of his first preaching the doctrine of the resurrection to jews and gentiles. and none of the apostles ever owned, any more than he ever claimed, a pre-eminence. St. *Paul* withstood him to the face, when he was to be blamed. And *Peter* himself forbids any one taking the pastoral care of the flock, *from filthy lucre, or as LORDS, or rulers over God's heritage.* and gives them in charge, to approve themselves exemplarily, as they will answer it to the chief shepherd. And in the article of *binding* and *loosing*, which Jesus gave the apostles, there is this only plain, simple, divine meaning, *viz.* that the system of truth and grace, which they should promulgate, would give mankind the unalterable terms of pardon and life. thus, whatever the gospel doctrine does bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatever it absolves on earth, shall be absolved in heaven.—But beyond this, the apostles had no power. and it was at their everlasting peril, that they themselves taught any other doctrine, than that which their master had first taught them. And as to the vertue of ordination, we are assured, that even from the choice and appointment of Jesus himself, it

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did



did not convey indelible character. for Judas, one of the twelve, whom he had chosen and ordained to the apostolate, proved a traitor. And St. *Paul* made no sort of dependance on his own ordination; but took great pains, and used much labour to prevent his being, *αδονιμῶς*, reprobate, or unapproved.

And it is equally evident, that none of the pretended successors of the apostles, the *priests*, who presume upon indelible character, have ever received from the apostles any power of healing the diseases and distempers of men, or of discerning spirits. But it will not easily be shewn, that a priesthood can be entrusted with divine authority over the souls of men, who are utterly incapable of producing a single attestation of such delegated power. and moreover, when the apostles themselves do openly disclaim any dominion over the faith of men, it is but reasonable to conclude, all of them to be *impostors*, who claim a derivation of much more extensive powers, than ever resided in their origin and source of authority. What is farther evident, and demonstrates the absurdity of all priestly claims, is this, *viz.* that ordinations or consecrations have never yet been known to secure the sanctity, the piety, or virtue of the priests, themselves; i. e. what should have rendered them

them the ornaments of christianity. how therefore is it possible that these men should be qualified to inspire and secure the virtue and happiness of others, when they themselves have been scandalously lewd, worldly and wicked; the pests of society, and the plagues of the world! Ecclesiastical history, is made up of the intrigues and stratagems, the contentions, strifes, and perpetrated villainies of church-men; displaying their ardent claims of power and dominion, in virtue of their consecrations. But in the views we have taken of religion, and of the christian religion, we can be fully satisfied there is no efficacy can be given to truth, or the least tendency to promote virtue, or to secure the happiness of mankind, by any priestly consecrations.

As I have shewn the simplicity of the Gospel-system, it may now, in this place, be pertinent to say something of the institutions of *Baptism* and the *Eucharist*. And with me, *Sir*, they are no other, nor any more than memorials of facts. the one, recognizeth the humiliation, that is to say, the sufferings and death of Jesus: and is to be celebrated joyfully, because of the greatness of his behaviour under the tortures. the other recognizeth the exaltation of the man Christ Jesus,

and confesseth him the one Lord of the christians. But neither the one nor the other have any efficacy in themselves, or, by vertue of the administrator, to purge the guilty conscience, and absolve the sinner. their original design was simple, their doctrine plain and easy, as they are monuments which preserve the credit of the Gospel-history, respecting the captain of the christian's salvation being perfected thro' sufferings; and do teach all men, that virtue is the way to glory. Thus we detect *churchism*, and distinguish it from christianity.

I might have added here a farther instance of the simplicity of the institutions, found in the apostolical church, *viz.* that as the Eucharist and Baptism, are monuments of the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus, so the observance of the *first day* of the week, rather than the seventh, as a day sacred to devotion, recognizeth the fact of Christ's resurrection; and so has put its credibility beyond any shadow of doubt or obscurity. But surely, it is not easy to account for the infatuation of churchism, in making the symbol of Christ's humiliation and sufferings, a test and qualification for civil honours and emoluments. there is an absolute impropriety and unsuitableness in this appointment. And, with  
all

all submission, I would humbly recommend to the advocates of churchism, that they make this emendation, *viz.* change the Eucharistical test, for that of the Baptismal : and oblige all whom the civil power chooseth to advance to posts of honour and profit, to have christian baptism re-applied to them, the more naturally to preserve the sense of the symbol. This ought to be done, unless it can be shewn, that the offices and honours, for which the sacramental test qualifies, do express the humiliation or sufferings of mankind. the stupidity of churchism will remain incontestably glaring, so long as the Eucharistical test is made the qualification for mens advancement to posts of profit, trust and honour.

I would not omit to remark, that popery arrogates the appellation of catholic-church, not only, as comprehending within her pale the whole of the christian world ; but from her claims to charity : or, from her pious concern for the salvation of souls ! And truly, *Sir*, such is the melting tenderness, and benevolence ; the compassionate feelings which she has for the welfare of mankind, that we should most ardently pray, none may ever come in competition with, or bear any, the the least resemblance of her. witness her catholic-massacres at *Paris*, and in *Ireland*.  
That

“ That in France destroyed, in cool blood, about thirty thousand ; it cut off the flower of the protestant families. and a late writer making mention of it, says, “ In the Irish Massacre there were a great many more murdered : for, by a book printed at *Lisbon* after, done by a priest, who called himself *Constantinus Marullus*, above one hundred thousand protestants are said to have been killed ; and some of them, with most exquisite and before unheard-of torture ! and the same author to shew his *catholic charity* adds, *utinam omnes*\*”. This very wish of the priest, *that all had been destroyed*, gives us a most pathological definition of popish catholic charity. which breathes after no less than the total destruction of all, who reject their superstition. She is the devouring monster, the roaring lion, the polluting, destructive DEVIL among mankind !

Another specious pretence of their claims to the application of the terms, *catholic church*, is, from their large and extensive numbers. this is their boast, and they will have it to be a note of theirs being the true church. Too much reason have they to boast of their increase in Britain. for in the beginning of the

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\* See *Curbing no Argument of Sincerity*.

By William Primatt. 4<sup>o</sup> 1746.

Rebellion 1745, the number of Papists which went one Sunday to Mass in London, were computed, by persons employed for that purpose, at about *sixty thousand*. in which year their whole number in London and Westminster, was reckoned *one hundred thousand*.

Their increase is continued, by means of great application, and unwearied assiduity. What bishop *Latimer* said of the Devil, is literally applicable to popery, “It is the most industrious, the busiest bishop in the whole world.” Small books at a low price, are printed and spread to villify the Reformation and the Revolution. and, in the country, certain sums, five pounds in some counties, are given to every new male convert to popery, who is necessitous: and the children of the poor, in Essex and elsewhere, are taken by them, and fed and educated in great numbers. In such an hopeful way is popery towards catholicism. I mean, towards becoming a *whole*, or a *total* in Britain.—

Whether these things, *Sir*, will have any serious consideration or not; or whether there be sufficient numbers, who have virtue enough to consider, will not be of trifling consequence.—Whatever the determination, you will allow me to give a very different definition

tion of the *christian-catholic church* ; — “ It comprehends, all and every individual christian, throughout the habitable globe, who does religiously consult the new testament writings, and makes a judgment of them honestly for himself ; esteeming its doctrine, precept and example the only divine standard and canon of his faith, worship and practice.” none but these make up any part of the christian catholic church : since none can be a member of the body, who do not hold the head. *St. Paul* has taught us to make this conclusion, for he declares all those to be carnal, and to walk according to men, who have their distinct separate leaders ; even though a *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas* had their supreme veneration. These partizans, had their faith grounded *in the wisdom of men ; and not in the power, or word of God*. But genuine christians place none at their head, but the one God, and the one Lord. church-men indeed, will have their Rabbi’s and Fathers, such as *Athanasius*, *Arius*, *Socinus*, *Calvin* and *Arminius* : and unless a man will suffer his faith to be stretched to the dimensions of their creeds and confessions, it shall be branded with heresy. But all doctrines of human device, which demand the supple submissions of *reason*, and will not bear the test of that divine judge, are fitter for demons, than for men.

What-



Whatever may be the fate of *Britain*, of one thing, I judge, we may be assured, *viz.* that popery will prevail, unless there be a farther reformation among protestants. that is, unless there be a more general reception of the first pure, divine principles of truth and liberty; which alone can recover the christian spirit, when all worldly power, dominion, and dignity shall die away from the christian church; when all spiritual wickednesses in high places, or the principalities of an hierarchy shall be trampled under the feet of Jesus.—which conceptions openly combat the popular prejudices. nevertheless again I observe, *that Jesus must reign till the father hath put all these things under his feet. and, when once he has put down, or purged his church of all rule, authority, and power, he will then deliver up the kingdom to the father. and the son himself shall be subject also to him, that God may be all in all!*

More I need not say on the subject of the *christian-catholic-church*; inasmuch as this may serve to shew, that popery has prophancely and absurdly assumed the appellation.

I am, Sir,

your devoted,

humble servant, &c.

P. S. Mr. DAVID HUME, in *his natural history of religion*, allows its foundation in reason to be most obvious. “ for no rational enquirer can, after serious reflexion, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine theism and religion.” But then he thinks it more difficult to shew, “ its origin in human nature.” (a) on these principles he grounds his enquiry. But what can he mean by religion admitting the clearest solution, concerning the foundation it has in reason ; yet, not so concerning its origin in human nature ? may reason then be separated from human nature in the religion of mankind ? is this possible ? how shall it be done, when no rational enquirer can, after serious reflexion, suspend his belief one moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine theism and religion.

To secure his distinctions, “ Polytheism or idolatry was, and necessarily must have been the first and most ancient religion of mankind. for, the most ancient records of the human race still present us with Polytheism as the popular and established system.” (b)—Does it not seem more natural to conclude, that from the creation mankind clearly saw the invisible things of God.

God? but that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, became wanton in their imaginations, and so corrupted the primary principles of pure theism. If the history of *Moses* be authentic, men degenerated from true theism to idolatry; and by their debaucheries brought on the destructive deluge. The primary religion of the new world, peopled by *Noah* and his family, surely could not be polytheism and idolatry. And certain we are, superstition, polytheism or idolatry could not be the primary profession of christians. especially since Mr. H. has said, “ nothing indeed would prove more strongly the divine origin of any religion, than to find, (and happily this is the case with christianity) that it is free from a contradiction, so incident to human nature.”--(a) Whatever was his design, this is the true character of genuine christianity, untouched by the over-officious fingers of men. and to which, this elegant writer seems much indebted for that charming description of theism, “ (b) a system which supposes one sole deity, the perfection of reason and goodness, which if justly prosecuted, will banish every thing frivolous, unreasonable, or inhuman from religious worship; and let

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“ be-

“ before men the most illustrious example,  
 “ as well as the most commanding motives  
 “ of justice and benevolence.” It must be  
 allowed a fine copy of the Gospel original ;  
 and could be taken from no other system.

This lively writer makes some very uncommon observations. “ Men have a natural tendency to rise from idolatry to theism, and to sink again from theism into idolatry.” and he concludes, “ that religion and idolatry have one and the same origin.” See his 8th section.

But in his 10th, “ the corruption of the best things give rise to the worst.” (a)—Of this we have some conception. not so of theism and polytheism having one origin. nor of the natural tendency in men to rise from idolatry to theism. and we should be inclined to ask some proof, how it comes to pass, that in this natural tendency to both extremes, we see not the mechanical vibrations of the pendulum equal, or nearly equal? how can we read over Mr. HUME’s *natural history of religion*, and give him credit, if this observation has any truth in it? why such an universal polytheism, if there be this natural tendency in man to rise from idolatry to theism? (a)

There is another discovery made by this  
 Philo-

(a) Also p. 63. *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

Philosopher, and that is, “ the origin of idolatry or polytheism, is, the active imagination of men, incessantly employed, in cloathing the conception they have of objects, in shapes more suitable to its natural comprehensions.” (a) which if conclusive, then religion and idolatry, theism and polytheism are equally natural to man ; and have alike a very fanciful origination. —

But in truth, his idea of the religion of mankind, does not intend more, than the superstition which has arisen from depravity. for, says he, “ one may safely affirm, that all popular theology, especially the scholastic, has a kind of appetite for absurdity and contradiction. If that theology went not beyond reason and common sense, her doctrines would appear too easy and familiar. amazement must of necessity be raised : mystery affected : darkness and obscurity sought after : and a foundation of merit afforded the devout votaries, who desire an opportunity of subduing their rebellious reason, by the belief of the most unintelligible sophisms”. (b) Is not this *Sir*, a fair specimen of what he means by the religion of mankind ? But could this be the first and most ancient religion of mankind ? does he not explicitly own it could not ? (a) “ In short, all virtue, when men are reconciled to it by ever so little

little practice, is agreeable : all superstition is for ever odious and burthenfome." (a) — and again, " after the commiffion of crimes, there arife remorfes and fecret horrors, which give no reft to the mind, but make it have recourfe to religious rites and ceremonies, as expiations of its offences. Whatever weakens or diforders the internal frame, promotes the interefts of fuperftition : and nothing is more deftructive to them than a manly, fteady virtue, which either preferves us from difaftrous, melancholy accidents, or teaches us to bear them. During fuch calm fun-fhine of the mind, thefe fpectres of falfe divinity never make their appearance. on the other hand, while we *abandon our felves* to the undifciplined fuggeltions of our timid and anxious hearts, every kind of barbarity is afcribed to the fupreme Being, from the terror with which we are agitated ; and every kind of caprice, from the methods which we embrace, in order to appeafe him." (b)

I would not miftake this writer, and therefore produce another of his defcriptions of the popular religions ; in which he is very exprefs in fhewing, that thefe fuperftitions have not their origin in human nature. " And that it may fafely be affirmed, many popular religions are really, in the conception of  
thefe

these more vulgar votaries, a spirit of Dæmonism ; and the higher the deity is exalted in power and knowledge, the lower of course is he frequently depress'd in goodness and benevolence ; whatever epithets of praise may be bestowed on him by his amazed adorers. Amongst idolaters, the words may be false, and belie the secret opinions : but amongst more exalted religionists, the opinion itself often contracts a kind of falsehood, and belies *the inward sentiment*. *The heart secretly detests such measures of cruel and implacable vengeance ;* but the judgment dares not but pronounce them perfect and adorable. *And the additional misery of this inward struggle* aggravates all the other terrors, by which these unhappy victims to superstition are for ever bounded".(a)

From this citation, I would ask, whether Mr. *Hume* has not acknowledged, that idolatry and superstition are not natural to man ? and that consequently, the principles of genuine theism and religion, must have their origin in human nature. — Superstition, the gloomy dread of deity, is no primary principle in the heart of man. (b) The opinion belies the inward sentiment : there is a secret detestation of it in the heart !

I presume to make the following conclusions.

Mr.

(a) p. 98.

(b) Though it is affirmed to be so in the 13th Proposition.



Mr. *Hume's* fundamental principles are manifestly wrong. he has called the superstition of the world, *a natural history of the religion of mankind*: he has affirmed, a natural tendency in man to rise out of idolatry into religion. he has strangely declared, that religion and superstition, theism and polytheism have one and the same origin; and this no better than the imagination.—Whereas, religion and reason in man, are inseparable. Religion could not arise out of superstition, theism out of polytheism. The universal spread of idolatry, by his own history, as universally confronts the proposition: and will not suppose it to have the least foundation in nature. for superstition has its origin in the disordered passions and imaginations of mankind; religion has its origin in a natural sovereignty which the reason of man exercises over these faculties. And from the nature of the thing, idolatry or polytheism could not be the primary profession of mankind; but must have been a corruption of pure theism and religion. Notwithstanding these sophisms, Mr. *Hume* has finely exposed superstition and popery: professeth himself an advocate of pure theism. and so far as he is a theist, he cannot be an enemy to genuine christianity.







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